

Summary

Indirect Relationship between Egoistic Relative Deprivation and Subjective Well-Being

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The present study investigates the possible variables that may explain subjective well-being based on Relative Deprivation Theory. Subjective well-being includes subjective cognitive considerations about the general life satisfaction of the person and affective evaluations about his/her emotional states such as presence of positive affect and absence of negative affect (Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009). In point of fact, subjective well-being can be defined as an umbrella term which contains mental health, life satisfaction, happiness and positive affect (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). In addition, personal growth initiative (including readiness for change) is considered as a part of subjective well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Robitschek et al., 2012; Ryff & Singer, 1998). In the present study, the positive subjective well-being is composed of positive affect, life satisfaction and readiness for change, whereas negative affect and perceived stress are evaluated as the indicators of the negative subjective well-being in the proposed structural equation models. The approach of the present study – investigating both positive and negative dimensions of subjective well-being – is used by other researchers as well (Clark & Watson, 1991; Huppert & Whittington, 2003; Karademas, 2007).

Subjective comparisons and interpretations define individuals' awareness and responses toward life events (Osborne & Sibley, 2013). Relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976; Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) has proposed that people subjectively compare themselves with other individual(s), groups or oneself at different points in time, and these subjective comparisons lead to cognitive appraisal in which the individual perceives own or in-group's disadvantaged position. Egoistic (individual-level) relative deprivation has mostly predicted individual-based outcomes, and was negatively associated with well-being (Schmitt, Maes, & Widaman, 2010), life satisfaction (Osborne & Sibley, 2013), self-worth and personal self-esteem (Walker, 1999). Deprived individuals tended to indicate more

depressive symptoms, frustration, anxiety, shame and stress (Walker & Mann, 1987). However, studies did not focus on the qualitative characteristics of the desired outcome; the possible distinction between material relative deprivation and emotional relative deprivation has not been made clear in the literature. In the present study, material egoistic relative deprivation and emotional egoistic relative deprivation and their possible different associations with individual level outcomes (including subjective well-being, perceived intrinsic strength, perceived extrinsic strength) will be investigated for the first time, to our knowledge.

Secondly, although the related literature has tested the direct relationship between egoistic relative deprivation and subjective well-being, indirect associations have been ignored. The present research also tests the mediating role of perceived intrinsic strength (including optimism, hope and self-esteem) and perceived extrinsic strength (including perceived social support from family, friends and significant others). Based on the related literature, it is known that subjective well-being is positively related with optimism (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Forgeard & Seligman, 2012; Wong & Lim, 2009), hope (Krypel & Henderson-King, 2010; Irwing, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998), self-esteem (Diener, 1984; Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996) and perceived social support (Holland & Holahan, 2003; Kessler & McLeod, 1985; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2010). Egoistic relative deprivation may be negatively associated with subjective well-being due to the negative effect of deprivation on perceived intrinsic strength and perceived extrinsic strength. In this regard, positive subjective well-being includes positive affect, life satisfaction, and readiness for change; negative subjective well-being includes negative affect, and perceived stress; perceived intrinsic strength includes optimism, hope, and self-esteem; and perceived extrinsic strength includes perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others.

Hypothesis 1. Different types of relative deprivation, namely material and emotional deprivation, will be related to significant differences in positive subjective well-being, negative subjective well-being, perceived intrinsic strength, and perceived extrinsic strength. It is not possible to predict what these differences will be due to the lack of information in the literature on this subject.

Hypothesis 2. Greater material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation will be related to lower levels of perceived intrinsic strength (optimism, hope, and self-esteem) which in turn will be related to reduced positive subjective well-being (positive affect, life satisfaction, and readiness to change) and increased negative subjective well-being (negative affect, and stress).

Hypothesis 3. Greater material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation will be related to lower levels of perceived extrinsic strength (perceived social support from their family, friends, and significant others) which in turn will be related to decreased positive subjective well-being (positive affect, life satisfaction, and readiness to change) and increased negative subjective well-being (negative affect, and stress).

Method

Participants

Four hundred forty-seven undergraduate students, enrolled in psychology and business administration departments of Middle East Technical University, participated in the study. There were 286 females (64%) and 161 males (36%). The age of participants ranged from 18 to 26, with a mean age of 21.02 ($SD = 1.71$).

Measures

Egoistic Relative Deprivation Scale. The instrument was developed by the authors of the present study. Participants reported what extent they have felt deprived with regard to material or emotional things when they compare themselves with others. Before scale items, the definition of relative deprivation was provided to participants and they specified the desired outcome. Participants responded to the 5-item measure using a 5-point Likert response format which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Researchers grouped the participants based on the quality of desired outcome as materially deprived or emotionally deprived. The scale explained 46.39% of the variance with .71 internal consistency. Item loadings ranged from .62 to .76. Higher scores showed greater material or emotional egoistic relative deprivation.

Positive and Negative Affect Scale. This scale was developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988), and includes 10 positive-mood adjectives (attentive, interested,

alert, excited, enthusiastic, inspired, proud, determined, strong and active) and 10 negative-mood adjectives (distressed, upset, hostile, irritable, scared, afraid, ashamed, guilty, jittery and nervous). The internal consistency was .85 for positive affect and .88 for negative affect sub-scales. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Gençöz (2000), and internal consistencies were .83 and .86 for positive affect and negative affect. In the present study, students indicated to what extent they have felt each state in the past three weeks using a 5-point Likert response format which ranged from "very slightly or not at all" to "extremely". Internal consistency reliabilities were .83 and .84 and higher scores showed greater positive and negative affect.

Perceived Stress Scale. The instrument was developed by Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein (1983) to assess the perceived stress level of individuals. Internal consistency of the 14-item scale ranged from .84 to .86. The short (10-item) form of the scale which includes two sub-scales, namely perceived stress (6 items) and perceived insufficient self-efficacy (4 items) was adapted into Turkish by Eskin, Harlak, Demirkıran and Dereboy (2013), and its internal consistencies were .80 and .69, respectively. In the present study, only the perceived stress sub-scale was used, and students indicated what extent they have felt stress in the past three weeks using a 5-point Likert response format which ranged from "very slightly or not at all" to "extremely". Internal consistency score was found to be .87. Higher scores indicated greater perceived stress.

Satisfaction with Life Scale. The scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) to investigate individual differences in cognitive evaluation of one's life. Internal consistency of the 5-item scale was .87. It was adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991) with .89 internal consistency. In the present study, participants responded to statements using a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Internal consistency was .82. Higher scores indicated greater satisfaction with one's life.

Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II. The scale was developed by Robitschek et al. (2012) to assess the personal growth process of the individual. The measure included four sub-scales: readiness for change (4 items), planfulness (5 items), using resources (3 items) and intentional behavior (4 items), and internal consistency scores of sub-scales ranged from .81 to .89. It was adapted into Turkish by Yalçın and Malkoç (2013), and internal consistency scores ranged from .61 to .87. In the present study, only the readiness for change subscale was used, and students responded to statements using a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with a .88 internal con-

sistency. Higher scores indicated the sense of knowing when one is ready to change in a particular way.

Life Orientation Test. The scale was developed by Scheier and Carver (1985) to measure expectations for positive and negative outcomes. Internal consistency of the 8-item scale was .76. It was adapted into Turkish by Aydın and Tezer (1991) with .72 internal consistency. In the present study, participants responded to statements using a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with a .84 internal consistency. Higher scores indicated greater optimism level including more positive expectations toward the future.

Dispositional Hope Scale. The instrument was developed by Snyder et al. (1991), and contained two subscales: agentic thinking (AT; 4 items) and pathways thinking (PT; 4 items). The internal consistency for AT ranged from .71 to .76, and for PT it ranged from .63 to .80. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Akman and Korkut (1993), and internal consistency was .65. In the present study, students responded to statements using a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with .72 and .81 internal consistency scores for AT and PT, respectively. Higher scores on AT indicated greater successful goal directed determination, and higher scores on PT showed greater ability to generate plans to achieve goals.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The scale was developed by Rosenberg (1965) to assess the individual’s evaluation about his/her worthiness as a human being. Internal consistency of the 10-item scale ranged from .83 to .95. It was adapted into Turkish by Çuhadaroğlu (1986). In the present study, participants responded to statements using a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with a .90 internal consistency. Higher scores indicated greater self-esteem.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. The scale was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley (1988) to measure individuals’ evaluations of perceived social support from family, friends and significant others. The measure included three sub-scales: family (4 items), friends (4 items) and significant others (4 items), and internal consistency reliabilities of subscales ranged from .85 to .91. It was adapted into Turkish by Eker, Arkar and Yaldız (2001), and internal consistency scores ranged from .85 to .92. In the present study, students rated situations using a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Internal consistency scores were .84, .89 and .97 for family, friends and significant others, respectively. Higher scores indicated greater perceived social support from family, friends and significant others.

Procedure

After the approval by the ethical review board of Middle East Technical University, the study was conducted in classroom environment. The purpose and content of the research were explained through the informed consent form, and the importance of voluntary participation was highlighted. Participants filled out the demographic information form and questionnaire package consisting of measures for subjective well-being, perceived intrinsic strength, perceived extrinsic strength and material/emotional relative deprivation. Data collection sessions lasted about 20 minutes. Students received bonus points for their course grades for their participation.

Results and Discussion

In order to compare mean scores of materially deprived ($N = 187$) and emotionally deprived ($N = 260$) individuals on study variables (*Hypothesis 1*), independent sample t-tests were conducted. Individuals who felt deprived with regard to material things indicated greater successful goal-directed determination and greater ability to generate plans to achieve goals and to obtain desired outcomes (see Table 1). They also perceived greater social support from significant others. On the other hand, emotionally deprived people felt greater negative affect. This difference may be explained with the concept of feasibility. Material things may be perceived as being more feasible to obtain and more effort-based than emotional things. There are different assumptions about the association between feasibility and relative deprivation. Runciman (1966) and Gurr (1970) associate feasibility with deprivation, whereas Davis (1959) evaluates these concepts as unrelated to one another. In later studies, the difference in perceived feasibility of material and emotional things, and associations with other preconditions of relative deprivation and possible outcomes, should be tested.

In addition, as illustrated in Table 1, there was no significant difference between materially and emotionally deprived individuals on the other variables tested. The relativity aspect of deprivation (Crosby, 1976; Runciman, 1966) may explain insignificant differences between material and emotional egoistic deprivation. Because of the small number of differences between relative deprivation in material and emotional matters, participants were not categorized for further analyses, which were conducted using all participants together using the variable name “material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation”.

Structural equation modeling was conducted using LISREL 9.10 to test proposed mediated models (Hypothesis

esis 2 and Hypothesis 3). As shown in Figure 1, material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation has a significant indirect relationship with positive and negative subjective well-being through perceived intrinsic strength ($B = -.06$, $SE = .03$, $t = -2.47$; $B = .08$, $SE = .03$, $t = 2.46$, respectively), and the proposed model indicated an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2(32, N = 447) = 124.60$, $p = .000$, $\chi^2/df = 3.89$, GFI = .95, AGFI = .91, NFI = .96, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .08, 90% CI [.066, .096]). Greater material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation leads to less perceived intrinsic strength which in turn decreases positive subjective well-being and increases negative subjective well-being. More deprived individuals have lower optimism, hope and self-esteem, and in turn they feel less positive affect, life satisfaction, readiness to change, and more negative affect and stress.

As indicated in Figure 2, material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation also has a significant indirect relationship on positive and negative subjective well-being through perceived extrinsic strength ($B = -.09$, $SE = .03$, $t = -3.03$; $B = .10$, $SE = .03$, $t = 2.98$, respectively), and proposed model indicated an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2(25, N = 447) = 95.51$, $p = .000$, $\chi^2/df = 3.82$, GFI = .95, AGFI = .92, NFI = .91, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .08, 90% CI [.063, .097]). Greater material/emotional egoistic relative deprivation leads to less perceived extrinsic strength which in turn decreases positive subjective well-being and increases negative subjective well-being. More deprived people perceive less social support from their family, friends and significant others, and in turn they feel less positive affect, life satisfaction, readiness to change, and more negative affect and stress.

The two proposed models also suggested that the mediator role of perceived extrinsic strength is greater than the mediator role of perceived intrinsic strength on the relationship between egoistic relative deprivation and subjective well-being, based on a comparison of unstandardized coefficients and t values of the indirect relationships. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported, whereas hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3 were completely supported.

In spite of the limitations of the study (including student sample, and correlation-based approach), the findings can be evaluated as complementary to the related literature. To our knowledge, until the present research, there has not been any study which considers the qualitative characteristic of the desired outcome (material or emotional) and investigates the mediating role of perceived intrinsic and extrinsic human strengths in the relationship between egoistic relative deprivation and subjective well-being. These findings are useful for researchers who are interested in the concept of subjective well-being.